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Flood row: Didi blocks entry of J'khand trucks

Trucks seen in a long queue on National Highway 19 in Dhanbad after the West Bengal-Jharkhand border sealed by the Mamata Banerjee government. The heavy vehicles are stuck at the border after the Bengal government restricted their entry in protest against the release of water from two dams in the neighbouring state, which resulted in flooding of parts of Bengal | PTI | P10

HC strikes down govt rules to set up fact checker

Says they are unconstitutional and can have a 'chilling effect' on freedom of expression

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai

THE Bombay High Court on Friday struck down the amended Information Technology Rules, specifically Rule 3, which empowered the Central government to form fact-checking units (FCUs) to deal with "fake, false, or misleading" content about the government on social media and online platforms.

The 'tiebreaker' verdict was delivered by Justice A S Chandurkar. The amended rules violated several constitutional provisions, including Article 14 (right to equality), Article 19 (freedom of speech and expression), and Article 19(1)(g) (freedom to practice any profession), Justice A S Chandurkar held. Rule 3(1)(b)(5)—the provision dealing with the establishment of FCUs—was ultra vires to the Constitution, he judge added.

Terming the amended provision 'vague and overbroad', the judge held that it could have a 'chilling effect' not only on individuals but also social media intermediaries and platforms.

Justice Chandurkar held that the expressions 'fake, false or misleading' are vague and that the test of proportionality is not satisfied. "Impugned Rule as amended be struck down. All the petitions will be placed before the division bench to be decided," the judge held. Justice Chandurkar's opinion will now be placed before a division bench, which will formally announce the 2:1 majority against the impugned rules.

The case was referred to Justice Chandurkar following a split verdict in the matter by a division bench of Justices G S Patel and Neela Gokhale in January. While Justice Patel struck down Rule 3 citing censorship concerns, Justice Gokhale ruled in favour of the provision.

Petitioners

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra, Editors Guild of India, News Broadcast and Digital Association, and Association of Indian Magazines had filed petitions

Govt's view

The Centre told HC in July that the right to know factually correct info and the right to not be misled were equally important as the right to freedom of speech and expression

Maha BJP will hit a century, says Fadnavis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai

MAHARASHTRA Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday expressed confidence in the BJP winning 100 seats on its own in the forthcoming assembly elections in November. He attributed his confidence to the slew of development projects his government initiated across the state.

Fadnavis was speaking at the first edition of *The New Indian Express*' Mumbai Dialogues — a platform for exchange of ideas on politics, economy and other social issues— in Mumbai.

However, Opposition leaders did not share Fadnavis' optimism. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray shared his concern over Maharashtra losing several development and job-generating projects to Gujarat during the current regime.

The event was also attended by Congress MLA and Maharashtra Congress in-charge Ramesh Chennithala, Rajya Sabha member of Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) Milind Deora and film director Kiran Rao.

Chennithala listed the failures of the Maharashtra government and expressed confidence that the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) would come to power in the state. The counterpoint came from Milind Deora who said during the MVA's rule, infrastructure development of Mumbai city came to a standstill due to internal politics. In contrast, under the leadership of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, infrastructure projects like coastal road, Atal Setu and airport at Navi Mumbai came up and got completed, he said.

Two sessions on economy, banking and equity markets discussed the challenges ahead, particularly those on job creation. "Creating jobs is the most critical aspect to sustain the current growth rate, which will lead to the country becoming a middle income economy," said banker Keki M Mistry. The former Vice Chairman and Chief Executive of HDFC said while the economy is on a solid footing growing at over 7%, to sustain this level of growth "we need to create more jobs".

To a question on the controversies around the Sebi chairman, he said the country's regulatory framework is extremely strong and robust.

Devina Mehra, founder of First Global, said that though share prices are at a record high, they are frothy only in certain pockets; so new investors have opportunities.

From left: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Maharashtra Congress in-charge Ramesh Chennithala, and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray participating in the first edition of The New Indian Express' Mumbai Dialogues

Guv: Who leaked info on plea to probe netas?

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

GOVERNOR Thaawarchand Gehlot has taken strong exception to leaking information to the state government and the cabinet on the Lokayukta police approaching him for his consent to prosecute certain JDS and BJP leaders.

In a letter issued on August 28, the governor sought an explanation from Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh in this regard. The governor's office stated that it expected a "prompt" and "early" reply from the chief secretary.

"I am curious and perplexed to note that how did the state government and the cabinet come to know about the request from the Lokayukta police ... and how did the Lokayukta police, being an independent body, share confidential material with any person..." the governor asked.

"I have been made aware through media reports published on August 23 that the cabinet had advised the governor to accord sanction for the investigation/prosecution proposal against HD Kumaraswamy, Murugesh Nirani, Janardhan Reddy and Shashikala Jolle received from the Lokayukta police without any delay," he said.

"But, on thorough reading of the cabinet decisions, it is further noted that there is only observation with regard to pendency in according sanction in the above four cases along with dates of submission by the Lokayukta police to the secretariat, but there is no advice as such," he said.

SC Bench seeks report on K'taka HC judge's remarks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday took suo motu cognisance of Karnataka High Court Judge Justice V Srishananda's controversial "Pakistan" and "undergarment" comments, and sought a detailed report from the high court's registrar general on the issue within two weeks.

Taking strong exception to the remarks of Justice Srishananda during one of his judicial proceedings, the five-judge bench of the top court led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and comprising justices Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, Surya Kant and Hrishikesh Roy took up this case.

Stressing the need for some guidelines while conducting court proceedings, the bench sought the report from the registrar general within two weeks and adjourned further hearing to Wednesday. P5

'MLA used HIV+ women to honey trap rivals'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A 40-year-old woman, who has accused BJP MLA **Munirathna** of raping her, has alleged that the MLA used women infected with HIV to honey trap his rivals. This has become a big challenge to the investigating officers as they have to trace those women and also the victims alleged to have been honey trapped.

According to the complainant, the MLA during his conversation with her, had claimed that a woman, who was used to honey trap one of his political rivals, was infected with HIV. The MLA had asked her to help him trap another person using the HIV infected woman. However, the complainant refused to do so.

The police, who are investigating the rape charges, will now have to identify the women infected with HIV allegedly used by the MLA to trap his rivals. "It is a very rare case where such allegations are made. We will have to consult experts on how to take the investigation forward," an officer said.

The police will soon get the woman, who is said to have been used by the MLA to trap one of his rivals, tested for HIV. If she is found HIV positive, then the honey trap victims will have to be traced and subjected to HIV tests, the officer said.

It is also not ruled out that Munirathna used this as a ploy to scare the complainant. The police are expecting that in all likelihood, the honey trap victims might file complaints against the MLA. It is said that a police inspector is also one of the honey trap victims.

Munirathna arrested in rape case

Munirathna was arrested by the police in connection with a rape case, filed by a 40-year-old social worker from Bengaluru, on Friday morning, immediately after he came of Bengaluru jail. P4

EXPRESS READ

CM: Will look into HDK, BSY land denotification

Mysuru: CM Siddaramaiah on Friday said he will look into records and act on charges against Union minister HD Kumaraswamy and BJP leader BS Yediyurappa of illegally denotifying BDA land | P6

3 Jawans killed as bus falls into gorge in J-K

Srinagar: At least three BSF troopers were killed, while 12 others injured when a bus carrying them fell into a gorge in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday | P10

Hell Paths **Why are city's footpaths in such deplorable state?** P2

Andhra effect: K'taka to test prasada in muzrai temples

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

The Karnataka government has decided to test prasada given in temples under the endowments department, according to Endowment Minister Ramalinga Reddy. This is in the wake of the controversy over the presence of animal fat in the prasada given to devotees at Tirupati temple. The state government has issued a circular directing the temples to use only KMF's Nandini ghee to prepare prasada, especially laddus.

Karnataka has over 34,000 temples under the department. Of them, 205 have been classified as Class-A with an annual revenue of over Rs 25 lakh, 193 as Class-B with a revenue between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 25 lakh and the rest as Class-C with a revenue of less than Rs 5 lakh. Most of these temples give prasada to devotees.

Reddy told *TNIE* that temples in the state offer safe and hygienic prasada and food to their devotees. "But people should not have any doubt. So we have issued a circular to conduct a test," he said.

Meanwhile, the office of the Commissioner for Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments issued the circular to temples to use only KMF's Nandini ghee to prepare prasada and other food items. P5

No Nandini ghee at TTD last year

Last year, TTD stopped procuring Nandini ghee and other KMF products over price issues. TTD started procuring Nandini ghee a few days ago.

TTD backs Naidu; Jagan raps *laddu* politics

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Tirumala/Vijayawada

THE controversy surrounding the famous Tirupati *laddu's* quality deepened on Friday with Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive Officer Shyamala Rao confirming that adulterated ghee was supplied by AR Dairy Food Pvt Ltd, a Tamil Nadu-based firm, adding action has been taken to blacklist it.

However, former chief minister and YSRC president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy rubbished the charges of adulteration, adding it was a diversionary tactic by his successor N Chandrababu Naidu.

Shyamala Rao, who assumed charge as executive officer on June 16 this year, said five companies were supplying ghee to TTD at ₹320-₹411 per kg. Since they were way below their cost of production, they set off warning bells.

"After our warning, supplies from all except one were found to be good. We found four tankers of ghee from AR Dairy to be substandard. Samples from the four tankers were sent to National Dairy Development Board's (NDDB) accredited lab CALF. It confirmed the low quality," he explained.

On the political front, Jagan accused Naidu of playing with the sentiments of devotees to divert public attention from his failure to implement election promises even after completing 100 days in office.

Explaining that there was no scope for using animal fat or adulterated ghee in Tirumala, he said procurement of ghee is a routine process that is being followed for decades.

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